

MINUTES

OKLAHOMA STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE: July 24, 1997

TIME: 9:30 A.M.

PLACE: OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ronnie L. Clark, Chairman - NRCS, State Conservationist.
Mason Mungle, Ex. Dir., OCC
Rod Wanger, FSA (Proxy for Terry Peach)
Dallas Stephens, USDA, Rural Development
Sam Combs, Jr., Oklahoma Landowners & Tenants Assoc.
Ken Williams, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Marla Peek, Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Carol Gaunt, OACD
Kenneth Battles, Choctaw Nation
Steve DeMaso, Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife Conservation
Beverly Tallbird, Chickasaw Nation
Keith Tyler, Bureau of Land Management
Glen Jones, Dept. of Environmental Quality
Gene Whatley, Rural Water Association
Punk Bonner, Dept. of Environmental Quality
Kurt Atkinson, Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture - Forestry Div.
Houston Klinekole, Apache Tribe
Paul Jackson, Oklahoma Farmers Union
Houston Klinekole, Jr., Apache Tribe
Walter I. Hare, Jr., Kaw Nation
Charles Head, Cherokee Nation
Michael S. Houts, Dept. of Environmental Quality
Charles Freeman, Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture

OTHERS PRESENT: Larry Caldwell, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Les Conner, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Marvin J. Cooke, Texas County Farmer
Johnnie L. Draper, Guymon Landowner
Phil Givens, Cherokee Nation
Ed Kephart, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Fred Little, Rosston, Oklahoma
Becka Redding, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Steven Wright

Meeting Called to Order - Ronnie L. Clark

The meeting was called to order by Ron Clark, Chairman, at 9:30 a.m. He noted that the meeting was held under Oklahoma's, 'Open Meeting Statutes'. Everyone had been properly notified and the meeting posted as the law requires.

All present introduced themselves. Carol Gaunt moved to approve the Minutes of the last meeting, Sam Combs seconded motion. Minutes were approved.

Ron Clark then turned the meeting over to Paul Jackson, Oklahoma Farmers Union. He led a discussion of old world bluestem grasses vs. natural grasses. Mr. Jackson stated that he hopes to help farmers re-plant to native grasses. He read a letter from a producer who thinks old world bluestem is excellent cover and does not agree that Government dollars should not be spent on replacing existing grasses with other grass.

Mr. Marvin Cooke was allowed the floor. He stated that old world bluestem is better cover for most animals, and native grass may be better for seed for birds.

Mr. Jim Draper, producer from Texas County, was allowed the floor. He stated that 12 years ago it was requested that they plant old world bluestem. Some did not want to plant old world bluestem so they planted a mix. One of the counties related that without the old world bluestem their deer population would be half of what it is now. Numerous appeals are on record for CRP signup #15 concerning the rejection of land in the program because of lack of native grasses. Mr. Draper stated that Signup #15 needs to be taken care of before Signup #16 begins in October. He feels that old world bluestem has been discriminated against, and has also had land rejected because of old world bluestem grass. He would like to work at appeals on record and ask Secretary Glickman to reconsider this area.

Mr. Fred Little was allowed the floor. He discussed hunting on old world bluestem. He said there is an abundance of deer, also more quail and pheasant than ever. There are problems with old world bluestem, but there are good things also. He said they have 7 to 8 coveys of birds per 1/2 section of land.

Charles Freeman commented that NRCS and ODA understand the problem, but do not know how to correct it. Steve DeMaso stated that he would like to discuss the matter from the opposite side. He thinks this is being looked at unrealistically. He stated that we need to make some compromises in this area. Ken Williams said that he understands that old world bluestem provides good coverage, but not enough food. A comment was made that we need a blend of the two grasses.

Ron Clark wanted to know what was being asked of the State Technical Committee regarding this issue. Maybe make a Position Statement from the Committee to the USDA.

Rod Wanger commented that action is needed now. The USDA-CRP Interagency Team is ready to set up everything for the next signup. He said that we need to look at this from the wildlife issue and use viable reasons. In Washington state, 2 million acres were submitted and only 200,000 were accepted. They are not appealing. No one has shown documentation that monoculture is not good for wildlife. Would like to see something done (documentation, or count given). In Oklahoma, 635,000 acres were accepted in the CRP. With errors and some other additions being made, it will probably go to over 680,000 acres.

Ron Clark asked for a position from the State Technical Committee.

Mason Mungle made a motion requesting the State Technical Committee write a letter to the Secretary of Agriculture requesting him to consider giving points to producers having strips of native grasses planted within old world bluestem land. Charles Freeman seconded the motion. All approved, motion passed.

Ron Clark then asked for volunteers to be on a subcommittee to draft the letter to the Secretary. A notepad was passed around and anyone interested in this task signed up. A copy of the letter sent to the Secretary will be sent out to all members.

Ron then introduced Kevin Norton to review the 1998 EQIP proposals.

Kevin Norton

We had 43 proposals sent in to the State Office. Copies of each of these proposals were previously mailed to all State Technical Committee members. It is the charge of the State Technical Committee to recommend to the NRCS State Conservationist, the priority of EQIP proposals to send on to Washington, D.C. There were eight approved Priority Areas for 1997.

At this point Phil Givens asked Kevin why the Oklahoma Indian Tribes were not notified of EQIP funding for 1997. (After some discussion of this topic, Ron Clark stepped in and suggested that Phil and he visit about the matter after the meeting, since there was so much material to cover in a short amount of time.)

Handouts on the Priority Area Proposals submitted for 1998 were given to all present (see attachment 1). A handout and overview of the proposal ranking process was then presented (see attachment 2). Kevin went through the process of how the proposals were ranked, and remarked that NRCS and FSA employees developed the process. The employees were: FSA - Rod Wanger and Buck LeGrand, NRCS - Tom Lamirand, Kevin Norton, Ted Kuntz, Kevin Wagner, and Steve Elsener. We will have five Natural Resource Concerns for those areas outside of the Priority Area issues. We can increase that amount if more money is received for 1998.

Marla Peek made a comment. She did not feel that the public's perception of environmental needs or concerns were addressed appropriately. Kevin agreed with her comment and suggested that adding a new column for serious threats for 1998 into an existing guideline could include it.

Glen Jones asked how they arrived at the point amounts on each guideline. Kevin's answer indicated points were equally divided among each guideline. Additional points were given in the guideline that dealt with achieving significant environmental benefits in a 3-5 year timeframe. Up to 7 points were given for environmental issues. Mason Mungle questioned whether we could achieve what we want to in the Priority Areas if we only receive 1/4 of the requested amount. Need to look at how the amounts will be spent if that is the case, such as going from the highest ranking down. Ron Clark commented whether Mason was suggesting that we fund each area down the list until the funding runs out. Kevin added that there would be a monetary bonus on Priority Areas that have good proposals. Mason asked how we are going to consider proposals that were not selected last year, but are re-submitted for 1998. Kevin answered that

all of the 1998 proposals were sent in from locally led groups. Only about three have been sent in unchanged from last year. Because a Priority Area Proposal comes in does not mean we have to send it on. Mason commented that at some point we need a system to follow when submitting Priority Area Proposals. Kevin said we can re-work the points (preferably by January), and have evaluation criteria set for 1999 Proposals so they can come to the State Technical Committee and be acted on quickly.

Mason asked where the monitoring and evaluation is in all of this? Considers it is a big part of funding and it should be added. Ron Clark agreed that it should be included in the original information sent out; that monitoring and evaluation will be a big concern when ranking areas.

Kurt Atkinson made a motion to accept ranking of proposals; Carol Gaunt seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Mason Mungle made a Motion that 90% of 43 proposals should be sent forward (top 39). Sam Combs seconded the motion. Motion failed.

AL (Punk) Boner made a motion to send all proposals forward. Ken Williams seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Charles Head handed out the EQIP Proposal from the Cherokee Nation that has already been taken to Washington, D.C.

Ron Clark then recommended that Rod Wanger head up the sub-committee to draft the letter to Secretary Glickman regarding the CRP National Ranking Factor for Wildlife Habitat Benefits on vegetative cover. The names of the persons who signed up for the sub-committee are:

Rod Wanger	Farm Service Agency, Coordinator
Mark Moseley	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Steve Tully	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Sam Combs	Oklahoma Tenant and Landowners Assoc.
Ken Williams	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Steve DeMaso	Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
John Hendrix	Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
Mason Mungle	Oklahoma Conservation Commission
Paul Jackson	Oklahoma Farmers Union
Wayne Wylie	Choctaw Nation
Charles Freeman	Oklahoma Department of Agriculture
Beverly Tallbird	Chickasaw Nation
Terry Peach	Farm Service Agency
Fred Wyatt	FSA State Committee
Marla Peek	Oklahoma Farm Bureau

Meeting was then adjourned by Ronnie Clark, Chairman, at 11:45 a.m.